Charles Haycock
1819

A

SHORT ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF IRELAND,

ON THE SUBJECT

OF AN

UNION;

BY A FREEHOLDER.

DIEU ME GARDE DE MES AMIS.

Dublin.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SHORT ADDRESS, &c.

WE are called upon, by the advocates of an Union, to diſcuſs that ſubject with calmneſs and moderation; and I do confeſs it is no more than prudent, in thoſe gentlemen to propoſe theſe terms of political combat when the queſtion is, whether or not an independent kingdom ſhall be converted into a province.

To reconcile us to a meaſure which fills impartial minds with a croud of difficulties and objections, they dwell, in the firſt place, on the ſtrength of imperial indiviſibility, and the weakneſs of the fœderal ſyſtem of independent ſtates.

In the ſecond place, they maintain, that this incorporation will allay our diſturbances and put a final period to the ſcheme of ſeparating the two kingdoms.

In the third place, they inſiſt it will introduce commerce, induſtry and riches into this kingdom.

And laſtly, that it will civilize our people and improve their manners.

In order that I may be favoured with a patient attention on a ſubject which, in my opinion involves your deareſt intereſts, I will diſcuſs theſe different heads with all the brevity in my power.

And in the firſt place, I look upon it, that the great object in the connexion of independent ſtates, is, that in relation to foreign powers, there ſhould exiſt a conformity of will and promptitude of deciſion

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in all the members of it, are indiviſibility, if I may ſo expreſs it, of mind and action in the means for their common ſecurity. If this object be atchieved, I conceive that all the reaſonable ends of Union are completely anſwered. According to this deſcription, the caſe of independent, fœderated republicks, (ſuch as Switzerland for example) can never apply to Great Britain and Ireland. Thoſe ſtates have no common bond or centre of Union: their reſolves are tedious, their motions ſlow, and their concord uncertain in regard to foreign powers; but the reverſe is the caſe in the empire of Great Britain: there the crown, with which every member of it is connected, is the common bond or centre of union. In that crown is wiſely veſted the prerogative of making peace and war and treaties with foreign powers, and accordingly whenever a determination has been made, with the concurrence of the mother

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ſtate, in any of theſe reſpects, it has been implicitly followed by every part of the empire. No one inſtance is on record to the contrary. What a futility, therefore, is it to ſuppoſe the caſe of an impediment thrown by the parliament of Ireland in the way of thoſe powers which they have held ſacred for centuries, and which, had they once attempted to obſtruct them, they knew muſt have juſtified the reſort of the crown to another corrective principle of the conſtitution, the diſſolution of the parliament.

But nature, by the interpoſition of ſeas, has made another diſtinction, when ſhe eſtabliſhed theſe barriers, which precluded general intercourſe, and even allowed acceſs only by intermiſſion, ſhe ſeemed to have ſuggeſted to countries, ſtanding in the relation of Great Britain and Ireland,

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the abſolute neceſſity of diſtinct legiſlative aſſemblies, each for its own government; a right which has been wiſely held ſacred by the mother country until this æra. And, conſidering that this empire looſes nothing, in the ſcale of nations, by this legiſlative ſeparation, as I have already ſhewn, I am unable to comprehend what political jealouſy could induce the mother ſtate to apprehend any formidable conſequences from continuing to a country ſo connected with her the full benefits and virtues of the Britiſh conſtitution. If ſhe had not been miſled by a ſimilar, fatal deluſion, *ſhe never would have experienced the loſs of America.* Taught by that important leſſon ſhe, then, gave way to the ſpirited expoſtulation of the Iriſh nation. But what is her language now, or which is the ſame thing, what is the language of her

her partizans in this meaſure? "that our "legiſlative independance will lead to "ſeparation, and ſeparation to hoſtility."* Leaving theſe gentlemen for a while to their metaphyſical fancies of tracing ſuch conſequences from the probable tranſitions of the human mind, I ſhall, for my part, confine myſelf to facts, and I deny that there are any to juſtify their poſition. Shall we be told that it can be juſtified by the events of the late unfortunate rebellion? that the act of virulent and diſappointed men, inliſted in the agency of France, who for ſome years paſt had practiſed in ſecret upon the refuſe of our people and at length inflamed their minds with the dreams of equality and ſeparation? ſhall we be told, I ſay, that it is the act of the nation? But let us ſee where the real ſenſe of the nation has been manifeſted. What has been the conduct of the

* Phamphlet entitled, Anſwer to Mr. Spencer.

the parliament? What has been the conduct of the corporations and of the men of property one and all throughout this kingdom? Have they not watched, have they not exerted and harraſſed themſelves to preſerve to Great Britain the connexion of this country? Yet the patrons of Union have let looſe their pamphleteers to brand that parliament with the moſt opprobrious epithets, to reproach the nobility with inſolence and tyranny, and the gentry with ignorance and corruption. Thus heaping injury on ingratitude, and inſult upon injury.

But if I were to indulge myſelf, after the example of theſe gentlemen, in reaſoning upon probabilities, I would ſay, that the zeal unanimouſly diſplayed, by the whole property of the nation, in pulling down the late rebellion, was, moſt probably,

probably, inſpired by a ſenſe of the bleſſings we enjoyed in a full participation of the Britiſh conſtitution, and the increaſed proſperity which was flowing from it, day after day, until that deplorable event: for had the French eruption burſt forth at that æra when this nation groaned under the cruel and tyrannous reſtraints of the mother country, had France, at that juncture, propoſed a viſit to our ſhores to inveſt us with that liberty and independence denied by Great Britain, is it unreaſonable to conclude from the indignation and oppreſſion of the public mind at that day, that very different conſequences might probably have enſued?

I come now to the ſecond head—" that " our diſturbances will be removed by " the incorporation of our parliament " with that of Great Britain, and a final

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" period put to the ſcheme of ſeparating " the two kingdoms."—I have waited with patience to hear by what arguments this intereſting poſition would be ſupported, I was well aware that the advocates for an Union would, upon a full conviction of this happy conſequence, attack a multitude of loyaliſts, worn out with the troubles of the times, and the conſtant apprehenſion of looſing every thing which was dear to them; but my patience was to no purpoſe.—Theſe gentlemen imagined that people, in the predicament I have juſt now mentioned, without any inveſtigation, would be caught by the lure of their aſſumption. They had, therefore, recourſe to a common artifice of ſophiſtical reaſoning, the taking for granted the very thing which ought to be proved. Since then theſe gentlemen have not condeſcended to ſupport their poſition with

even the leaſt ſhadow of an argument, I would gladly appeal to the common ſenſe of any loyaliſt of this country, whether or not he could find his underſtanding eaſily perſuaded that the removal of the moſt conſiderable peers and commoners out of this kingdom, which their watchfulneſs and influence have lately protected, would have the ſingular effect of allaying our diſturbances? If it had been poſſible for us to ſuppoſe that the favourers of an Union had been leagued with the French, in my opinion they could not have fallen upon a more happy expedient. It would be preciſely the treaty of the wolves and the ſhepherds.

As to ſeparation, having already ſaid a few words upon it, I have reſerved only a very few more for this part of the ſubject, where the moſt ſerious conſideration offers itſelf,

itſelf, which, perhaps, this meaſure can ſuggeſt. It is admitted on all ſides, that the compact of this incorporation when once decided upon cannot be recalled. The doom of this Iſland will then be irrevocably ſealed. What if any of the moſt important terms upon which ſhe may have acceded to the Union ſhould be violated, (which we know by example is no ſtrained ſuppoſition,) where is the remedy which is left her? Here may be ſeen at once, the fatal error of parting with independent powers, which, alone, can ſecure, between nations, the faith of engagements, and here muſt be ſeen the abſurdity of a contract, when the very eſſence of that contract is the ſurrender of thoſe powers. But the moſt ſerious queſtion is yet to be aſked. What if the ſure conſequence of this meaſure were to ruin and exhauſt this nation, (as I doubt not I ſhall be able to

ſhew) in that caſe where will be her redreſs? There is, there can be but one anſwer—the ſword. From theſe premiſſes the inference I ſhall draw is this, that an Union of the legiſlatures of theſe kingdoms is not a mean to prevent a ſeperation, but in its conſequences will probably tend to produce it.

But it is inſiſted, in the third place, "that an Union will introduce com-"merce, induſtry and riches into this "kingdom." If you except the commerce of the Eaſt-India-company, which muſt always remain excluſive, we know that, at preſent, the trade of the whole world England excepted is open to Ireland; and that ſince the attainment of that important object until the æra of our diſtractions and trouble, ſhe has continued to thrive by it, day after day. Our progreſs

greſs had even exceeded our expectations. Although the long depreſſion of this kingdom had forced our lower ranks into habits of idleneſs by interdicting their induſtry, and the malady had increaſed by the increaſe of population, although our commercial freedom, not long acquired, had not yet time to diffuſe its benefits through the great maſs of the people (which was the real cauſe of rendering too many of them a prey to the artifice of our enemies) yet it is notorious, that a multitude of inſtances of individual wealth, unknown to us in our former ſtate, have been remarked among the induſtrious of the lower order, every where throughout this kingdom. Theſe ſymptoms have given us reaſon to expect that the progreſs of a few years would materially change the character of our people. We know that our advances muſt be gradual; but here

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the empirical advocates for Union interpoſes, and enſure us they ſhall be rapid. If we will take their remedy, they promiſe us Engliſh capitals and Engliſh manufactures, allured by the ſecurity of legiſlative incorporation and the cheapneſs of Iriſh labour. But while we were at peace and beginning to proſper, we experienced no importation of theſe capitals and manufactures, and ſhall we, now, when this iſland has been ſhaken by inſurrections, (which I think I have ſhewn an Union will not be likely to ſuppreſs,) ſhall we, now, be led to hope, that we can hold out any thing inviting to Engliſh manufacturers, already affrighted by the events of this country? As to the cheapneſs of labour, we know that almoſt all the great manufactures of England owe their perfection to machinery which ſuperſedes any argument drawn from the cheapneſs of labour,

bour, and that, even, if the conductors of thoſe works ſhould be diſpoſed to eſtabliſh themſelves in Ireland, they could not truſt, as far as labour might be neceſſary, to the inexpertneſs of our people. But when by the means of this machinery they are enabled (as is actually the fact) to underſell us in our own markets, what expectation can we entertain of ſucceeding in theirs, or of attracting any of their capitals? If that be a vain hope then let us ſee, what will be our ſituation. It has been a full century ſince the complaints of the exhauſting drain from the rents of abſentees have reſounded out of doors, and, at length, have made their way, repeatedly, into parliament. That drain is now computed at a million, ſterling. Every body ſees with horror, in the meaſure of an Union, a frightful increaſe of this calamity. The continual reſidence of our moſt conſiderable peers

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and commoners in Great Britain will, probably, in that caſe become inevitable; nay more—what man of independent property will bear to ſink into inſignificance in a deſerted, melancholy, dejected country? add to theſe conſiderations, the enormous indemnification for burroughs,—The price of our own degradation—extracted from ourſelves—the greateſt part of which will be exported, with their late wealthy proprietors, and expended in England. But the great, the lurking miſchief, which in the diſcuſſion of this ſubject, has been ſtrangely overlooked, is yet to come——an export, which will exhauſt us to the dregs. No leſs than the produce of all our taxes—the whole revenue of the kingdom and all the increaſed impoſitions which would accrue from the Union would be poured into the treaſury of Great Britain, with a parſimonious return of a miſerable pittance.

I maintain

I maintain that there is no poſſibility of ſuggeſting a compenſation equal to the magnitude of ſuch an evil. When the blood, which circulates freely through our veins, ſhall be ſucked, in this manner, almoſt to the laſt drop, which vital heat can reanimate the dead corſe of this nation.

Before I diſmiſs this part of the ſubject, I muſt remark that nothing is likely to prove more fatal to the intereſts of this country, than for any ſet of men to propagate an opinion, that the public judgment ſhould be ſuſpended, upon this meaſure, until its details ſhall be laid before parliament, as if all the frightful features of its principle were not ſufficient to appal us, or as if the mockery of a trifling detail could make us a compenſation. My alluſion is to the language of the few learned gentlemen, who have lately entered their pro-

teſt againſt the deciſion of their brethren; but, ſurely, they are wiſe enough to know, and experienced enough in the practice of parliament to be convinced, that the very moment we are brought to that detail the fate of this country is decided. I ſincerely wiſh they had been more impreſſed by the ſentiments of that learned gentleman, who was the firſt to warn both them and his country of the dangers that awaited us. His diſintereſted character is known: the ſoundneſs of his head has juſtly placed him in the higheſt eminence of his profeſſion; and the ſoundneſs of his heart has deſervedly procured him the public eſteem. Declining all thoſe ſituations which attract other leading men of his profeſſion, he has found important occaſions to do his duty to his country.

I come

I come now to beſtow a few words upon the laſt point I propoſed to conſider, I mean the improvement in civilization and manners which we are told is to flow from this incorporation. Here is another aſſumption which, equally unlucky with the reſt, ſerves only to lead the mind to oppoſite concluſions. I have already ſhewn that the hope of our attracting mercantile capitals is no more than a deluſion; of conſequence, no increaſe of intercourſe between Great Britain and Ireland is likely to take place from that event. Shall we be told that an annual voyage of our richeſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed legiſlators ſhall import arts, manufactures and civilization unknown to them before? or rather ſhall we not think that their conſtant reſidence in England, rendered by convenience almoſt indiſpenſible, ſhall deprive this forlorn country of that patro-

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nage of arts and of induſtry which they animated by their preſence and nouriſhed by their wealth? Shall we not ſay that manners will degenerate when the beſt models upon which they can be formed ſhall be taken away? That polite learning will languiſh, when that ſpur to the ambition of youth, which ſtimulates the improvement of talents and gives every man who poſſeſſes them an hope, in his turn, of diſtinguiſhing them in the ſenate of his country, ſhall be no more?—And what ſhall we ſay of the metropolis of this kingdom, the reſort of arts and ſciences, the poliſhed market of all the conveniencies and elegancies of life, by this meaſure deſolated and undone? What a picture is here of civilization?

I have now endeavoured to ſhew that ſeparate legiſlatures in the Britiſh empire

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are not liable to the objection of impediment and diſunion, in regard to foreign powers, which applies to certain fœderated, independent republicks; that, on that account, their phyſical ſeparation renders their legiſlative Union unneceſſary; that an incorporation of the Britiſh and Iriſh parliaments is not likely to allay our diſturbances or put a period to the ſchemes of ſeparation, but tends in its conſequences to produce them both; that it is not in the power of the ſiſter kingdom to offer any commercial compenſation, in the leaſt degree, proportionate to the exhauſting drain of the rents and revenues of this country; and laſtly, that the improvement and civilization of Ireland, inſtead of being promoted, are eſſentially defeated by this injurious project.

I omit

I omit the inapplicable compariſon of this country to Scotland, which was neither diſtinct in her boundaries, fertile in her ſoil, or, at the time of her Union, independent in her legiſlature. I omit many local circumſtances in which the reſidence of your parliament is neceſſary for encouragement or redreſs; for the protection of arts and ſciences and of riſing manufactures; for the ſupport of your charitable foundations and for the reimburſement of loſs in laudable and induſtrious enterprize. How, if this diſaſtrous event ſhall take place, will the numerous petitions which ſought your protection, in a variety of inſtances find their way to the attention of parliament? Shall the ſuitor, exhauſted with litigation, again reſort to another kingdom for a final appeal? and ſhall the conſtituent body, who may be defrauded of the right of election, find redreſs

dreſs impracticable—and reſign, in deſpondence, the proud prerogative of freedom?

But quitting theſe conſiderations, I will not even take up your time with quoting the contemptuous inſult offered both to our feelings and underſtanding in arguing the neceſſity of our ſubmiſſion from our inability of ſelf-defence, and the great burden we impoſe on Great Britain in the temporary ſuccours ſhe has ſent us; but when we know that that proud kingdom, now grown inſolent by victory, has emptied her treaſures to ſupport the tottering crowns of emperors and kings, who were eſtranged from her, and has ſent her fleets and armies to protect them againſt the moſt formidable convulſion, which has ever diſturbed the peace of the world, we ſhall neither be impreſſed with a ſenſe

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of our own weakneſs or of her generoſity.—

If all theſe circumſtances impreſs conviction on your minds, ſtand forward firmly, but temperately. Call upon your countrymen to expreſs the national ſenſe; but above all things call on the Almighty God, who ſaved you when you were defenceleſs, and, by a ſingular interpoſition of his providence, diſperſed the fleet of your enemies, that, now, in a more galling, though leſs dangerous criſis, he will interpoſe for you again and extricate you from the ſnares of your friends.

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